



BTA sponsors foundational seminar aimed at improving logistics cooperation

*By the Warfighter Requirements Directorate,
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In a crisis, any gap or inefficiency in logistics becomes quickly apparent. Identifying problems before a contingency happens is a critical need for the Department of Defense (DoD), and recently the inaugural Seminar on Improving Logistics Cooperation in Crisis Environments convened to address the issue. The seminar brought participants from across the Department together to learn from public, private and volunteer sectors on how to improve cooperative operational planning.

Teaming with the Joint Staff Directorate for Logistics (J4) and the non-profit Institute for Defense and Business, the Business Transformation Agency's Warfighter Requirements (WR) Directorate chartered the seminar, held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, N.C.

The seminar, which ran from August 29 – September 3, provided a forum focused on improving logistics cooperation between the DoD, public, private and non-profit sectors in post-disaster and post-conflict environments. The 26 participants brought diverse, real-world experience to the table, drawing on lessons learned from disaster response in places ranging from Haiti to Pakistan. A primary goal was to build relationships and develop a level of assured reliance to improve cooperation. Many of the gaps and inefficiencies in logistics during crises, participants found, can be traced to a lack of trust between individuals and organizations or in legal and regulatory impediments.

“My greatest take-away was learning more about the different perspectives that stakeholders have during crisis situations,” said Army Lt. Col. Phil Keller, a participant and member of the WR Directorate.

Academic presentations throughout the seminar were combined with a capstone practical exercise. “The role-playing exercise really ingrained the seminar's lessons,” Keller said. “It has changed the way I will approach and react to the complex logistical problems presented by disaster scenarios.”

The key themes emphasized were leadership, cooperation, information sharing and security awareness in crisis environments. Discussion focused on identifying misrepresentations, miscommunications and biases that inhibit trust and on understanding the roles and missions of participating organizations in disaster and conflict response. Identifying the legal and regulatory obstacles to cross-cultural collaboration was also studied, together with ways to raise the profile of host nations' public and private sectors in logistics solutions.

The interaction was a powerful learning experience, said Air Force Lt. Col. Chris Hobbs, also a participant and WR Directorate member. “The interactions between participants were unscripted, off-the-cuff and completely enlightening,” Hobbs said. “This forum provided the perfect venue for speaking directly and candidly with my various logistics counterparts from other organizations, many of whom I'd probably never have the opportunity to meet otherwise.”

Along with the practical knowledge gained through the seminar, the logisticians left Chapel Hill with an expanded network of professional relationships, critical to success in an increasingly connected and complex operating environment. “The opportunity to network with such a vastly diverse group of logisticians was extremely valuable, as were the new relationships forged over the course of the week,” Hobbs said.

The WR Directorate is BTA’s focused engagement channel for business operations that bridges the gap between long-term strategic goals and near-term needs, providing direct support to the warfighter. WR also supports the Joint Staff J-4 mission to integrate logistics planning and execution in support of joint operations to drive joint force readiness.



Participants in the inaugural Seminar on Improving Logistics Cooperation in Crisis Environments, after successful completion of the course in Chapel Hill, N.C., September 3.